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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Robert E. Brown. *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002. xxi + 320 pp. $35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-253-34093-1.

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In his book *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible*, Robert Brown illustrates the connection between historical Biblical interpretation and Jonathan Edwards's conservative theological system. He proposes to "address the manner and degree to which such problems (i.e. interpretive difficulties raised by historical and literary criticism) permeated Edwards's religious thought and career, and indirectly, their significance to the development of colonial religious thought in general." This work masterfully carries out that task. Whether a course on historiography, colonial history, Edwards scholarship, or Biblical interpretation, this work demands examination and consideration as a reader alongside primary texts. I can see it used as a textbook in any of the courses mentioned above. It adds a significant example of historiographical investigation to Edwards scholarship. The breadth of disciplines covered by this book simply amazes.

Brown highlights his formidable task by his attention to precise documentation and research. Heavy use of endnotes causes this book to be a little harder to read for those wishing to know the background of each notation. The length of many endnotes clarifies the decision to have them instead of footnotes. However the amount of supportive documentation impresses me. He faithfully points to other works for clarification and more information. Though not overly laden with jargon, this works appeals to the scholarly researcher as well as the interested reader. A great example to other writers, Brown makes and illustrates his points without belaboring the details by which he arrives at them. For the inquisitive, this information is found in the endnotes. And unlike other books previously written about Edwards, Brown focuses the reader on Edwards's attention to historical and critical biblical interpretation. Those who have studied Edwards will marvel at the penetrating depth and scope of Brown's analysis. Those who have not studied Edwards will stand on the shoulders of a conscientious scholar, having read this book. Each chapter shows different layers from which Edwards worked to understand the Bible more faithfully. Brown shows that Edwards's career was one of careful attention to scripture, and faithful response to critical questions. That work ethic has inspired Brown to produce an admirable work about Edwards.

As a contribution to the field, readers will appreciate the support for Edwards's conservative theological outlook explained in response to biblical criticism. Brown argues that his struggle to resolve these questions was critical to his theological thought and his ministry. I found his section on Edwards, Locke, and epistemology rather interesting as well. I might never have guessed that Jonathan Edwards owed something to John Locke regarding biblical interpretation. Though Edwards disagreed with Locke at many points, Brown shows how Edwards dealt with Locke's theory of knowledge in his own writing.

This book stands to become a standard by which to judge others who write about Edwards, or about eighteenth-century interpretation. With the breadth of disciplines supported, it could have been much longer. The reader will delight in Brown's succinct delivery. With an easy to follow structure, the author manages the topic as only one with broad scope could do. He skillfully tells me more than I ever knew about "the brilliant philosopher and theologian who was also, if not equally, an astute historical thinker, the pastor and man of letters who precisely and insightfully anticipated issues that his parishioners and the broader community would inevitably have to confront in their religious lives." Libraries, historical centers, and scholars cannot overlook such a work on Jonathan Edwards.

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